

## Japan nuclear crisis: engineers battle to stop boiling pool

Engineers at Japan's stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant battled to stop a pool holding spent nuclear fuel from boiling, as fears about contamination spread to the country's seafood industry.



By [Nick Allen](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/nick-allen/) , Tokyo

1:54PM GMT 22 Mar 2011

The pool at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in [Japan](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/) heated up to around boiling point, and with water bubbling away there was a risk that more radioactive steam could spew out.

Nuclear agency official Hidehiko Nishiyama said fuel rods had been partly exposed. He added: "We cannot leave this alone and we must take care of it as quickly as possible." After shipments of spinach and milk from the Fukushima area were halted because of heightened levels of radiation, new tests found elevated levels of radioactive iodine and cesium, in sea water. That prompted the Japanese government to order monitoring of seafood.

Levels of radioactive iodine-131 in sea water samples near the plant were 126.7 times higher than the safety limit.

However, Yukio Edano, the Chief Cabinet Secretary, said: "Radiation levels higher than safety levels were found in the sea-water, but these levels indicate radiation levels that would still be safe even if you drank sea-water for a year.

"Of course, if this were to continue over a long period, some effects will be seen, so we have instructed relevant ministries to step up monitoring efforts of sea water." The seafood industry has already taken a huge hit from the tsunami, with expectations that supplies of some produce could be cut off for a year.

---

[Britons promised free flights home from Japan](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/8387460/Japan-nuclear-crisis-Britons-promised-free-flights-home.html)

[Japan: fears mount over radioactive waste](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/8395985/Japan-nuclear-crisis-Fears-mount-over-radioactive-waste-in-food.html)

[Nikkei jumps as car makers restart production](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/8397277/Japan-earthquake-market-jumps-as-car-makers-restart-production.html)

[Japan begins the clear-up](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/8398196/Japan-begins-the-clear-up-and-buries-victims-of-the-earthquake-and-tsunami.html)

---

At Tokyo's Tsukiji central fish market, the largest fish market in the world, trader Toshiharu Kagami, said: "The tsunami washed away all of east Japan's farmed scallop industry. And it washed away all the people who worked there."

Tsukiji handled 544,000 tonnes of seafood in 2009, but following the tsunami there are no flatfish, black rockfish, abalone, oysters

or seaweed from the north-eastern provinces. One official said there were 70 per cent less customers than usual.

Trader Eiichi Heima, the 66, said: "Some people are asking for fish that aren't from up north, because of the nuclear plant." Japan's economy is reeling and three of its major companies - Sony, Toyota, and Honda - announced halts to production at plants in Japan because of a shortage of parts from ruined factories in the north.

Meanwhile, thieves exploited the chaos of the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami to steal 40 million yen (£300,000) from a bank safe.

The tsunami washed over the Shinkin Bank, in the destroyed city of Kesennuma, knocking out security mechanisms and leaving the safe open.

In Fukushima an executive from Tecpo, the nuclear plant operator, visited evacuation shelters for the first time to apologise to refugees.

Norio Tsuzumi, the Tepco vice president, bowed deeply and said: "I apologise deeply because the company has caused anxiety and nuisance to the local residents around the plants, in the prefecture and in the wider society.

"Since I have tried to manage this problem hand-in-hand with the government, my visit here to directly meet you was belated. For this I also apologise from the bottom of my heart." Tepco said it was making steady progress to reconnect electricity to cooling systems at the plant's six reactors.

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission said reactors one, two and three, had all seen damage to their reactor cores, but that containment measures were intact.

Executive director Bill Borchardt, said: "Things appear to be on the verge of stabilising."

Radiation 1,600 times higher than normal levels was detected 12 miles from the power station, the limit of the evacuation area.

While radiation at that level is not considered high for a single burst, it could harm health if sustained.

Miniscule amounts of radioactive particles believed to have come from Fukushima have been detected as far away as Iceland.